

is a very serious issue. And toy guns, as you know, is something that we need to deal with, because many of our young people are getting killed because of toy guns.

In my own district, we have had several youngsters to be killed because they had a toy gun. We have had youngsters to be shot. But Dr. Bob Lee has been working with us in terms of getting this message out to adults, letting them know that toy guns is something that you should not buy for your son or your daughter. I think that this is the kind of message that we have to send, because even the police department, they are saying that toy guns are very dangerous because they are saying that if it looks like a gun, as far as they are concerned, it is a gun. And I think that we do not expect them to stop and interview somebody as to whether or not the gun is real. If it looks like a gun, as far as the police department is concerned, it is a gun.

I want to thank Dr. Bob Lee and all those people out there helping to make certain that we get the message across to people that toy guns are not something that our young people should have and that people should not purchase them for them. It is not the kind of toy that you want to give. Give an educational toy, give something that is going to bring about life, give something that is going to encourage people to be able to grow and to develop, not to give them something that they will probably get killed because they have it.

I would like to salute him tonight and to say, Dr. Bob Lee, we applaud you for the outstanding job that you are doing on behalf of the young people in this Nation and we hope that you will be able to continue to expand it as well.

#### DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE AGENCY HELD HOSTAGE BY DO-NOTHING/DO-WRONG REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues are joining me tonight because we really want to make the point before this Congress adjourns for the recess over the next couple of weeks that it really has been a very unproductive session because of the Republican leadership's lack of an agenda, or perhaps because they have the wrong agenda. Many of us know that at some point over the next week or perhaps 2 weeks when the appropriations bills are finally completed that the Congress will adjourn, probably until sometime in January. But this has been a terribly unproductive session.

The Democrats want Congress to get to work on the real priorities for middle-class families, priorities the Republican leadership has once again ignored in favor of the needs of special interests. Democrats want to get the job done this year. We do not want to wait until the next year, the next session of Congress, and have another year of unfinished business, because that is simply unacceptable. Democrats still believe that we can get action on an agenda that matters. I wanted to talk briefly if I could, to mention some of the major priorities that the Democrats have put forward in this Congress that the Republicans have either refused to act on or have sent off to conference between the Senate and the House where they have essentially been buried because the conference has never met or in some cases the conferees have not even been appointed.

What we have done to sort of highlight the number of important issues, if you will, that are part of the Democratic agenda that have not been addressed by the Republican leadership is to put some of those major issues, if you will, on tombstones to sort of highlight the fact that they are resting in peace rather than being accomplished in this session of the Congress. I just want to point to a few of them and then I would like to yield to some of my colleagues to talk a little more about some of these issues.

The first one and the most important for me is the Patients' Bill of Rights. That was killed by the GOP, in this year, 1999. I think you may know that today, the Republicans finally appointed conferees on the Patients' Bill of Rights, but there has been no indication that the conference is actually going to meet and we have had this one basically hanging around for several years, where the Republicans fooled around, tried to load down the Patients' Bill of Rights with whatever kind of poison pills, if you will, imaginable to make sure that it never passed, and then when it finally did pass over their protests a few weeks ago, they are still stalling by either not appointing the conferees or having the conference actually not meet.

The Patients' Bill of Rights is in my opinion the most important legislative priority, the one that my constituents talk about the most, because they are worried that if they are in an HMO or a managed care organization, that oftentimes they cannot get quality care or they cannot get the kind of care they want because they are denied an operation, they are denied a particular procedure, they are denied a length of stay in the hospital, because basically the insurance company decides that they should not get it.

The other priority, and this one is just as important, the other priority that the Republicans have buried, again resting in peace, is the Medicare

drug benefit. The President in his State of the Union address earlier in this year basically pointed out that the cost of prescription drugs for seniors is skyrocketing, many of them cannot afford it, many of them do not have prescription drug coverage as part of certainly Medicare, even if they do have it in some cases if they are in an HMO or part of their MediGap insurance, and so far the Republicans have refused to even address this one at all. Democrats keep talking about it as an important priority for America's seniors. It is not being addressed by the Republican Congress.

Another one, I hate to even mention this in the context of a tombstone because we know in fact that many Americans, including young Americans, have actually been killed because of the neglect to deal with gun safety issues. Mr. Speaker, several months ago we tried here on the floor of the House of Representatives to pass gun safety legislation. We were able to get a few things passed, but essentially because of the Republican inaction, the major priorities are still not addressed, and certainly nothing has been done in conference to address the gun safety issue. Every day that goes by, we hear about more Americans being killed, more Americans being maimed, and yet the gun safety issue remains unaddressed, killed by the GOP in 1999. It is resting in peace as well.

And then also, a major issue which again has been hanging around here for several years, the Democrats have demanded campaign finance reform. We know that our constituents want it, the editorial writers talk about campaign finance reform because we know that what is happening now is that so much soft money, corporate money, if you will, not individual money, is being used either to finance campaigns through the political parties or through independent expenditures, that the reality is that the campaign finance system has fallen apart, and there is no accountability, no disclosure anymore of the soft money that is being used. Well, we passed the Shays-Meehan bill finally a couple of months ago but again there has been no conference, there has been no action between the House and the Senate by the Republican majority.

There are a few more issues, and I am not going to go into all of them, but I did want to mention a few more if I could. Very important, the President a couple of years ago talked about the need to have Federal dollars go back to school districts to hire 100,000 new teachers in the elementary grades in order to try to reduce class size, because we know that if you reduce class size, it has a real beneficial impact on students', in the younger years in particular, ability to learn. We know that in this Congress again the Republicans are willing to provide some money for

education but not to give back to the town specifically to hire more teachers. Again, I hear from my own constituents how important that is. Not addressed by this Republican Congress. That one rests in peace as well.

And finally, the Republicans have made a lot of noise about how they want to give tax breaks, but the tax breaks are all for wealthy individuals. They passed a trillion-dollar, almost a trillion-dollar tax break, primarily for wealthy people, for the corporations, for special interests, but we as Democrats are saying, look, we need tax relief but we would like it to be targeted tax relief, that helps the average working person, that is actually used, if you will, to allow people to send their kids to college, to help with their education, higher education expenses, to provide, if you will, for day care in some cases through tax credits or tax deductions. But, no, the Republicans insist on the trillion-dollar tax break plan primarily for the wealthy and the special interests. They will not provide the targeted tax relief that will help working families and the average American. That again is resting in peace, killed by the GOP leadership, the GOP Congress in this year, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to poke fun at this issue, I think these issues are very important, they are part of the Democratic agenda, they would be, I think, a part of the Republican agenda if only they would understand that this is what the American people want. But the Republican leadership refuses to address the concerns of the American people and instead they just want to pull their own priorities, their own agenda, which is primarily a major tax break, if you will, for wealthy Americans and for the large corporate interests.

I would like to yield now, if I could, to some of my colleagues to talk a little more about this do-nothing Congress and this Congress that with the Republicans in charge essentially has the wrong agenda. I yield now to the gentleman from New York.

□ 2000

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE). I also want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) as well as the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) for this evening's address. Few have done as much to express the frustration that we are feeling on this side of the aisle as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) has so readily done on a weekly and daily basis here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my outrage and my disappointment as a freshman Member of this House with the actions, or should I say, the inaction of this body.

Mr. Speaker, we are more than two-thirds of the way through this session,

and the Republican-led Congress has had no major accomplishments. This is despite the efforts from within their own party and by Democrats, working together, to pass meaningful HMO reform, school construction legislation, and even a minimum wage bill. Instead, the Republican leadership has been playing games with the budget, giving tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of the people in this country and their special interest friends, blocking meaningful attempts at gun safety legislation and taking money away from class size reduction and new teacher initiatives.

As a freshman, I arrived last January prepared for action, and believed that with GOP promises of less partisanship that we could all work together to help the American people. Yet the last 10 months have been partisan and without any intelligible agenda. Instead, the special interests and their whims have dominated, leaving the American people out in the cold.

Rather than passing a meaningful tax bill, complete with estate tax and marriage penalty changes and modest tax cuts, the Republican leadership pushed through a tax package that benefited only the wealthy and corporate special interests, almost \$1 trillion to the wealthiest in this country. In fact, if you are not in the top 1 percent of wage earners, the tax cuts would not mean anything to you, or very, very little. Now, maybe all the constituents in Republican districts make that kind of money, but the working class people in districts like mine do not.

Why not provide a family of four living in a place like New York City, a high cost place like New York City, in the Bronx, in Queens, in my district, earning \$40,000 annually, some tax relief? What is wrong with that? Well, it is probably because they will not be contributing to the Republican leadership's political action committee this year, or next year.

What about our Patients' Bill of Rights? We finally voted today on a motion to go to conference on the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights. It has been 4 weeks since the House passed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 275 to 151 the Norwood-Dingell bill. The Senate appointed conferees back on October 15, and yet it is only today, November 2, that the House GOP leadership is finally bringing up a motion to go to conference. As far as I can see, this delay strategy by the GOP leadership is their attempt to stop the momentum that was obtained by very strong bipartisan vote in favor of the Norwood-Dingell HMO reform bill.

Mr. Speaker, why are we stopping what Members of your party want, what the American people overwhelmingly want? Why are we stopping it? We cannot even get on the runway or get off the charts a prescription drug

bill to reduce the cost of prescription drugs to our senior population.

Let me tell you a story that I heard recently. I received a letter from two constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Done and Gertrude Schwartz of Long Island City in Queens. He is 89 and she is 84 years of age. Recently he went to have a prescription filled for his wife. He bought 100 tablets of Prilosec, an extremely popular drug among our seniors. It cost him \$394.89, \$394 for 100 tablets of a vitally needed prescription.

People are making life and death decisions as to whether they will pay the rent, buy needed groceries, or skip a day of taking a needed prescription drug, or simply not buying the prescription drug at all, and we are here in Congress doing nothing, as far as I can see, to help them.

Then there is the budget debacle. We are 34 days into a new fiscal year, and still we do not have a budget. What is the Republican solution? To send the exact same D.C. appropriations bill that we have seen vetoed twice to the floor again today, without removing the riders that caused the vetoes in the first place. It makes absolutely no sense to me.

The Republican leadership did not even bring to the floor the labor-HHS appropriations bill for a debate. They went straight to conference without any Democrats represented at all at any point in time.

But, having said all I have said, it is education that is most troubling to me. We passed ED-FLEX, which impacts the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, before we even considered ESEA reauthorization. Then the Republican breakup of ESEA into pieces, passing the flawed Teacher Empowerment Act, and I want you to know this was not supported by one, not one teachers organization, we just passed a dramatically underfunded Title I bill.

When crafting tax packages the Republican majority will not even consider adding school construction assistance, even though our deteriorating school infrastructure and classroom overcrowding is a national crisis.

Then we have Social Security. Republicans say they want to save Social Security. Well, we will just go back to history a little bit here. Back in 1935, in the early thirties, nearly 40 percent of Americans were dying in poverty. It was a Democratic-led Congress and a Democratic President who signed into law the current Social Security system, this despite fierce opposition from the Republican Party. In fact, all but one Republican in the House voted for a motion to recommit Title II of the bill to conference, and would have thereby struck the Social Security Act and killed Social Security as we know it today, only one Republican in that entire conference.

Now we are to expect that the Republicans are going to protect and save Social Security, something they never

wanted in the first place. In fact, let me just show you some of the comments made by majority leader DICK ARMEY when he ran for Congress proposing to abolish the Social Security system.

"Ultra-conservative economics professor DICK ARMEY, who has based his campaign on his support for the abolishment of Social Security, the Federal minimum wage law, the corporate income tax and the Federal aid to education." That is from United Press International, October 31, 1984.

Again we see Mr. ARMEY in 1984 said that Social Security was "a bad retirement and a rotten trick on the American people." He continued, "I think we are going to have to bite the bullet on Social Security and phase it out over a period of time."

See, that is the Republican side of this issue. They never wanted it in the first place. I do not see how we can expect them to save it.

Mr. Speaker, the American people do not want this. They do not want a partisan Congress living up to its do-nothing billing. I urge you to work with the President and the Democratic leadership to craft budget bills we can all support. I implore you to let the majority rule and move the bipartisan Norwood-Dingell bill on to the President unchanged.

Finally, I want to invite you to come to my district and tell the students that are being taught in closets, in hallways, tell the children in kindergarten classes with 60 kids and two teachers, tell those children, going to school in buildings that are still burning coal, that they do not need to have school modernization provisions added to any tax bill.

Now, I know there are very decent people on the Republican side of the aisle. I have had the pleasure to work with so many of them in this, my first term in Congress, and I can call many of them my friends. But I am not giving up on the rest of you either. But we need to work together. We need to end the partisanship and do what is right for the American people, and do what is right for the American people today, not tomorrow, not next week, not next year.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from New York for the statements that he made. Essentially the gentleman is pointing out what we have been saying, which is that here we are, I guess it is over a month since October 1, which was when the new fiscal year was supposed to begin, and we are just basically staying here while we watch the Republicans try in some fashion to put together a budget. But it is virtually impossible for them to do so, because essentially their priorities are off base.

Unfortunately, while we wait here, they do not move on this agenda, which we think is important, the Pa-

tients' Bill of Rights, trying to come up with a Medicare drug benefit, the education initiatives that the gentleman mentioned.

I just wanted to point out very briefly, because I would like to introduce another one of my colleagues, this is from a summary that was put together today that when Speaker HASTERT started the year he made three promises in regards to the budget. One, he said that the Republican Congress would pass the budget on time, stay within the spending caps, and do it all without spending Social Security.

They have failed on each one of these counts.

Mr. HOLT. Strike three.

Mr. PALLONE. Exactly, strike three. We are now four weeks past the budget deadline, which was October 1. It is now November 3rd. Even the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH), the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, said this morning, and this is from The Los Angeles times, that the Republicans had not stayed within the budget caps, and both the Congressional Budget Office and the OMB have reached the same conclusion, that Republicans are spending as much as \$17 billion into the Social Security surplus. None of these promises have been kept, and we are still here.

I yield to my colleague from my neighboring district in New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

Mr. HOLT. I thank my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and I am pleased to be here with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and my colleague the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

You know, when the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and I and the other freshmen Members of Congress in both parties arrived here, we thought perhaps there would be less partisanship than we had seen in the preceding years here in Congress. As the gentleman may recall, the previous Speaker left following a less than stellar performance in the last election, and we find now, unfortunately, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) was saying, that partisanship did not depart with the previous Speaker.

We end up with important legislation that the public wants, and the gentleman has been through it with your tombstone illustrations, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) has repeated these. These are things that people want, Americans of both parties, Republicans and Democrats, and, in fact, I would say many of the moderate Democrats with whom we serve here in the House of Representatives and many of the moderate Republicans with whom we serve here in the House of Representatives. But the leadership that controls the agenda of the House will not let these come up.

We are, by most accounts, nearly done with the first session of Congress

and the leadership is now preparing to adjourn for the year without having done these things that the Americans say are important, that I hear about in my district in New Jersey: Campaign finance reform, gun safety. You know, they think maybe the public will not notice that we have not dealt with gun safety because they scheduled it so the votes would occur in the middle of the night, but my constituents notice that it has not been dealt with.

The Patients' Bill of Rights. Well, yes, we passed it by a large majority here in the House, but the leadership, again, who control the schedule of these things, weeks later are only beginning to get around to the conference that would be necessary for this to actually become law.

□ 2015

A Medicare prescription drug benefit, nowhere to be seen; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, not ready yet; school construction, school construction assistance, that so many school districts in urban areas, in fast-growing suburban areas, really all over the country need, and the smaller class size and more teachers, more well-trained teachers, nowhere; paying our obligation to the United Nations, I hear about that from my constituents, not done.

Among all these priorities left untouched is social security, so let me touch on that for a minute. Protecting social security I think should be our first priority. The President, in his State of the Union addresses this year and the previous year said, save social security first.

Protecting social security is so important to me that the first bill I brought to a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives was the social security and Medicare Lockbox Act of 1999. This bill would have preserved social security and Medicare. It would have forced us to deal with this issue.

The first speech that I gave on the floor of the House even before that was about the need to protect social security. I even voted for the bipartisan lockbox legislation to preserve social security, which did eventually pass the House, but really went nowhere because the leadership was too busy concocting an \$800 billion tax cut.

So throughout the past several months I have served on the bipartisan Social Security Task Force. I must say that preparing for the retirement of the baby boom generation looms as one of the Nation's challenges. I am very disappointed by the lack of commitment in finding a long-term solution.

When social security was passed in 1935, as my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) points out, to be old was usually to be destitute. Social security has changed

that. Social security has worked. People in the U.S. believe that it is of fundamental value to help workers save for retirement.

But the leadership has not shored up social security. Instead, like magicians engaging in misdirection, they have instead accused the Democrats in the press and in paid political advertisements that we, we in the minority, are spending social security.

Not only have they not gotten around to this central problem, but they spent so much of this year developing this exorbitant scheme to spend money that we do not even have and may never have; in other words, a scheme that would in fact take us into spending social security funds.

In fact, they are already spending social security funds by virtue of the fact that they have failed to complete the appropriations for the current fiscal year by the end of the month of September, as they had promised and as is expected. So in fact they are spending at last year's rate, which means they are exceeding this year's caps.

So what are we going to do about social security? Social security pays benefits to more than 4.7 million disabled workers. Because about 25 to 30 percent of today's 20-year-olds will become disabled sometime before retirement, the protection provided by the SSDI program is extremely important.

Today nearly every wage-earner now pays into the social security system. We have to assure them that this is a sound investment. We do not have to ask a retiree if social security is a good program, they know it is. They want it preserved. We need to reassure the younger workers that this is such a good program for them. Younger workers are skeptical.

The fact remains that few of today's young workers are likely to have enough personal savings or private pension benefits to support themselves in the appropriate style after their retirement. Like the current generation of elderly, they will be heavily dependent on social security. It is incumbent on us to deal with that.

Social security is the most successful program of government in the United States in the 21st century. We must not forget that it provides vitally important protections for American seniors. The majority of workers have no pension coverage other than social security, and more than 60 percent of seniors depend on social security for the bulk of their livelihood.

This is just one of the many priorities that this Congress has failed to deal with in this session, which is rapidly approaching the close. I do not know what more we can do except say, as my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and others of us have said night after night, these are important issues, let

us deal with them. Let us deal with them in a bipartisan manner. What more can we do?

Mr. PALLONE. We can only do what we are doing now, which is to speak out and tell our colleagues and tell the American people what is really going on here. What is really going on here, again, is the wrong agenda. The only agenda that I see that the Republican leadership has is tax cuts for wealthy Americans and for corporations and special interests.

Every proposal that the gentleman and our other colleagues here tonight have put forward as part of the Democratic agenda, and I hesitate to even call it a Democratic agenda, because as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) said, it is really the American people's agenda. It should be a bipartisan agenda, and we even have some colleagues on the Republican side who have supported some of these initiatives, like the Patients' Bill of Rights.

But the Republican leadership, because they are so dependent, if you will, on special interests, refuse to let any of these bills come up; or if they come up, they basically try to load them up with all kinds of poison pills or kill them in conference, use all kind of procedural techniques to kill them.

I appreciate the fact that the gentleman did bring up the social security again, because I know, when I am back in my district in New Jersey, I know they have those radio ads on basically accusing the gentleman of using the social security surplus, which is a total lie.

In fact, what they have done is what they accuse the gentleman of, which is, they have spent \$17 billion into the social security surplus already. That comes from the Congressional Budget Office and the OMB. How could it be more clear? I have never in my entire life seen a political party or leadership actually put on ad accusing their opponents of doing what it is documented they are doing themselves.

Mr. HOLT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, it is what magicians learn in their early courses of misdirection. If they have their hand in the cookie jar, point to the other person and accuse them of engaging in thievery or lockpicking, or whatever it is that they are accusing us of.

It is preposterous, insulting, and insulting to the American people.

Mr. PALLONE. It really is insulting, I agree with the gentleman. I appreciate that he brought that out.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK).

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I appreciate him for putting together this special order now. I also thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT). I really appreciate the gen-

tleman. They are new Members, and they bring a lot of enthusiasm to the job, and a good, practical approach to government. We really need that in this body at times.

I think it is very unfair how the Republican majority are running ads against the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) on spending social security, yet he is the person who came up with the social security lockbox idea so that we cannot spend social security; the gentleman is absolutely right, like the cookie jar thing where they point at you while they are sticking their hand in the cookie jar, taking \$17 billion from the social security surplus to try to pay for this faltering budget that they have put forward.

All the colleagues who join us here were here in November, and quite frankly, the Republican-led Congress has done very little. They have passed 13 appropriation bills, knowing five of them are going to be vetoed. So the appropriation bills languish, and the needs of the American people. And the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is right, it is not a Democratic agenda, but the needs of the American people are not being met, are not being met at all.

The Republicans have spent a year trying to convince the American people that they need this \$792 billion tax cut, which would benefit the wealthiest Americans. But America saw through that. They said, put the money to pay the debt and strengthen social security. Do not give this money in a tax break. Do not raid our social security. They rejected it.

Did they understand that? No. Look at this, Congress Daily, Wednesday, November 3: "Hastert Pledges New Tax Cut Push." It is here. He is going to push another tax cut.

How is he going to pay for it? We do not have enough money to pay for the current appropriation bills. There is \$17 billion taken out of social security to pay for the current budget, and we are not even done with it. While they are spending that, now they want another new tax cut push. This is Congress Daily, nothing we made up. This is what we get every day. Sure enough, they are going to push another big tax break to benefit the wealthy.

How are we going to pay for it? Back to raiding social security? Why do they not accept the gentleman's proposal and do a lockbox? Why do they not take those false ads off the air and thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) for putting on the lockbox, for saving the social security surplus so the Republicans cannot use it for tax breaks.

Mr. Speaker, as we take a look at it, they have had the wrong priorities. They have tried to use gimmicks to pass the budget. I remember about 6 months ago, as we got toward the October 1 deadline, they came up with this

great idea, let us call it the 13th month, the 13th month. We all know there are 12 months in the calendar, but they want to create a 13th month. That way they can stay within the budget caps by creating this fictitious 13th month. Sometime, somewhere, we have to pay for that 13th month.

So I am proud of Democrats standing up and saying, we are not going to accept that gimmick. Take away the 13th month.

Then they said, let us declare everything an emergency, everything we do not have money for. If we declare an emergency, we do not have to stay within the budget caps. Let us declare an emergency things like the Census. We have to count the American people. It is in our Constitution for over 200 years. Every 10 years we count the American people. It is 2000, the 2000 budget, and we have to count the American people.

Well, we will declare that an emergency. That way we can spend money, spend the social security trust fund and not have to declare it as part of our budget.

My colleagues are right, this GOP Congress is really the do-wrong Congress, not do-nothing. What they do, they do it wrong. It is a do-wrong Congress, instead of listening to the American people and working on the programs that would cost very little and really would improve the lives of the American people, like a real Patients' Bill of Rights, so Americans and their doctors would make medical decisions, and not the insurance companies and HMOs; like increasing the minimum wage, since we have this robust economy. Why cannot those who are struggling to get by enjoy the strong national economy by increasing the minimum wage?

Or how about 100,000 more teachers, 100,000 more teachers, and we can have smaller class sizes, so students who are most at risk can get a helping hand to learn, so we can bring some discipline back into the classroom? Why not?

Why not, I would ask, Mr. Speaker, why should we not enforce all the gun laws that are on the books, and do background checks on every commercial sale of a gun, even those at gun shows? Let us treat everyone the same. No more excuses, no more exceptions. We should be working for the American people.

Unfortunately, the Republican-led Congress has the same old song: more tax breaks here for the wealthy and more tax on government.

What America wants us to do, they want a Congress that will work for them, like the plans that the Democrats are fighting for: 100,000 teachers that we need for smaller classrooms; 50,000 more police officers in the Cops II program that we have all fought for, and we see it works across this great Nation; a real Patients' Bill of Rights.

We need to protect our environment, and we have to provide prescription drug coverage for our seniors. That is not asking too much. We can pay for it, and it is paid for without busting the budget or raiding social security.

We have talked about HMO reform and a real Patients' Bill of Rights. We passed it here by an overwhelming bipartisan vote, 275 to 151. So what do we do today? Appoint conferees. Who appoints conferees? The Speaker. Who are the Republican members of the conferees that were voted on today? Not the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), who is the sponsor of the bill; not the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE), who knows something about medical stuff; or the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

Why? Because they all voted for a Patients' Bill of Rights. They are doctors. Who did they appoint? They put on people, some of these 151, the people who voted against the bill. Tell me, are we going to get a real Patients' Bill of Rights when the conferees who work out the difference all voted against the bill? We do not have one Republican member who voted for it on that conferee; another gimmick, another gimmick. These guys vote for gimmicks instead of reality and practical government, and try to move the effort forward.

Look, we ran the bill and they lost. Accept it. What happens when we have a conference? The major sponsors of the legislation are the conferees, not those who are going to vote for special interests; in this case, the insurance companies. I cannot believe they do this stuff.

When we talk about the Patients' Bill of Rights, the medical needs of the American people, I want to share one story. I just got a call in today. I am not quite sure how I can help the individual.

□ 2030

In my hometown in Menominee, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, this gentleman owns a small business, been going great guns, been expanding and doing well, an employer. He has full-time benefits for his employees and health insurance for his employees and their families. He was telling me he has 90 employees. It used to cost him \$17,000 to \$19,000 to pay for health insurance.

Unfortunately, one of his employees, their wife had open heart surgery. So they had to renew their insurance.

The insurance company says, not going to cover you anymore. You have a claim against us.

No, we did not have a claim.

Yes, you did. One of your employees, their spouse had open heart surgery. We will insure you but it will now cost you \$49,000 a month.

One claim, 90 employees. It used to be \$17,000 to \$19,000 a month. Because of

this one claim, open heart surgery, it is now \$49,000. That is more than triple the premium went up because of this.

So in our Patients' Bill of Rights, what we say, let us enforce these rights, and there is a carryover provision. So if your coverage gets dropped by the insurance companies, you can stay with that doctor and continue care.

What happens to the lady who just has open heart surgery and the company can no longer afford the extortion by the insurance companies and has to drop the insurance? How does she get her follow-up care? How does she do it without bankrupting that family?

So I think the Democratic Party or the American people have the right agenda. They want us to do things that will keep us within the budget. They want us to do things that affect their everyday life.

I do not know about my colleagues but after the debacle of the Republicans before with the \$792 billion tax break, no one in my district was pounding on my door saying give me the tax break. Every time they heard about it, they pounded on my door and said do not give the tax break. Put money in Social Security. Put money in Medicare. Give us some prescription drug coverage, and if there is \$3 trillion, is it not time we pay down that debt?

The American people know what they want. They know what they need. And they said, you know, geez, you guys had a good start with 100,000 teachers last year. We have about 30,000. Can you get the other 70,000 in there, because we do want the smaller class sizes, whether it is New York or upper Michigan or New Jersey, and they are not having students out in the hallways because classes are expanding. Right now, in this country we have more people in K through 12 education than ever before in our Nation's history, but we are not helping them out. We are not helping them out.

Why not the 50,000 police officers? Why not? Crime is going down. Everything is going well. Now you stop, you throw in the towel and say we do not have to do anything else to fight crime; let us get rid of the cops? It just does not make any sense to me whatsoever.

What we have seen is a Republican-led Congress, all kinds of gimmicks, an agenda that has been rejected by the American people. That is why I call it the do-wrong-thing Congress.

We have done some things. It has all been wrong. The American public rejects it. The people who we have talked to reject it. They just need a little helping hand from government. So I am pleased that they have spoken up and we will continue to speak up for the American people through these special orders.

I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for allowing

us some time to come down and join him here tonight, and my good friend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT). I would say to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT), tell them to pull those ads and put the truth on TV. The gentleman is the one who did the lockbox for the Social Security trust fund, not raiding it, and of course the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) who does well with New York and the conditions there in trying to educate the children in a big metropolitan area where they have overcrowded classrooms, and even up in my northern district, northern Michigan district, we do not have the size of New York but we still have students being taught out in those temporary trailers.

I think it has been 15 or 20 years now. The temporary trailers are still there falling apart. We certainly do need help with more teachers and a bond proposal to help school construction.

I appreciate the opportunity. That is what I am hearing from my constituents. I wish we could work in a bipartisan manner like on the Patients' Bill of Rights and then do not give us a gimmick in appointing conferees who all voted against us and then say we are going to give a fair conference on Patients' Bill of Rights. It does not make sense to me.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK), particularly when he points out the gimmicks that are being used by the Republican leadership because that is what it is all about. They have the wrong agenda and they want to do whatever they can to block the right agenda, which is the legislation we put forth.

I was talking to some of my colleagues, even some of my Republican colleagues at lunch today, and I found out, and I do not know that it is true in New Jersey but there apparently are a number of State legislatures where they have rules that the conferees have to be the people who supported and voted for the bill, and it is not even allowed under the rules of certain legislatures in certain States to appoint conferees who did not support the bill.

It makes sense, if one thinks about it. By saying that they are going to appoint conferees that actually did not support the bill, they are basically sending the signal that this conference is not going to allow the provisions of the bill to be upheld, and that is the signal that they are sending.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, for 200 years this body has operated most of the time in a bipartisan, courteous way. As my colleague was saying a moment ago, if the Speaker's party lost on a vote, the Speaker said, well, we gave it

a good shot. We made our best case. The other side won. That is the way representative government works, and the Speaker would appoint people who would see that the best legislation came out of that vote.

Mr. STUPAK. Which reflects the wishes of the House, not their personal agenda or the agenda of special interests but the will of the House. Let the will of the House prevail in this conference report, in this conference committee. Also, if one takes a look at the rules of the House, they do not say it is mandated but they certainly suggest that the sponsoring people of the legislation, the bulk of them would be conferees, should be conferees. They do everything but say they must be the conferees.

I think it just adds to the poison atmosphere we see around here, and again just another gimmick to defeat things that the American people are demanding.

The conference report no one sees that, conference committee, so we can kill it right there and nothing ever happens. We do not have to worry about real reform. It is just ridiculous.

Mr. HOLT. The American people are not interested in gotcha strategies within the internal politics of this body. They want legislation that deals with issues that they deal with at home, that they talk about at their kitchen tables.

We have just been through a long list of those that could have and should have been dealt with in the past 10 months.

Mr. PALLONE. I agree, and I appreciate the gentleman bringing it to our attention.

Let me now yield, if I can, to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER) who has joined us.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join the distinguished group of Members from New Jersey and New York and Michigan who have been here speaking about these issues, and to bring a Massachusetts point of view to some of what is being said.

Here we are, we are almost finished with the 1999 congressional session. We have five major budgets yet to go. We are only 5 weeks late. Some of the States have been later than that but we are very likely going to be done in a couple of weeks and maybe even some are saying within one week. Yet this has been really a strange session.

Legislative bodies usually try to do the things that meet the popular will, but the Republican leadership of this Congress, in 1999, does not even try to deal with issues that the largest number of Americans say again and again that they want done. For the first time in 30 years, we have the prospect for modest and growing surpluses. We have the money to do those most important things that people really want done, and yet the Republican leadership has

refused to bring forward a bill that would extend the Social Security system so that the next generation would have the same opportunity to have the Social Security system for them that my generation has and will have secure for them.

The same leadership, the same Republican leadership, has refused to extend the life of the overall Medicare program that has been such a boon for our senior citizens in making certain that they could have quality health care that they can afford. It is clear, as has already been said from the way they have set up the conference committee on the Patients' Bill of Rights, that they really do not intend to pass a patients' bill of rights that would take the medical treatment decisions for every American family away from insurance executives and accountants and give those treatment decisions back to doctors where they belong.

The same Republican leadership has refused to add even a modest prescription drug benefit to the Medicare program. We have millions of senior citizens who are paying \$200 or \$300 for prescription drugs. Well, maybe not millions but we have a lot of senior citizens who are paying \$200 and \$300 a month for their prescription drugs and they really cannot afford it.

By the way, we have seen the spectacle of this House passing a campaign finance reform bill in a matter of just a few weeks, with the votes of dozens of Republican members who courageously refused to follow their leadership in weakening that legislation; only to see the bill killed in the other body, in the Senate. There simply is not going to be any campaign finance reform this year or in this 106th Congress and very likely in this century along the way.

Why? Well, just as an example, it should not surprise anybody out here in the watching audience that drug companies steadfastly oppose the creation of a prescription drug benefit to the Medicare system because they are making great profits off drug prescriptions for senior citizens, and those end up substantially being paid by the government. They are making great profits and, oh, by the way, it should not surprise people that of the 10 largest corporate contributors to Republican leadership political action committees, that a majority of those are themselves the drug companies.

So then we have among those other things that have not been done this year, there is a proposal to increase the minimum wage by \$1 over 2 years. We have had an unprecedented good economy, growth in our economy over an 8-year period. We have the lowest unemployment rate in decades. We have people working at minimum wage who deserve to see some benefit for their work, and only get to see that benefit



if there is an increase in the minimum wage.

By the way, 80 percent of Americans favored an increase in the minimum wage. Just as similar numbers favor a Patients' Bill of Rights and favor the prescription drug benefit for senior citizens to be added to our Medicare program and favor the extension of our overall Medicare program so that the life of that program will go beyond the year 2015, which is now the time when it will go bankrupt.

Well, the extension of the Social Security system for the next generation, all of those things are favored by 75 percent or 80 percent of Americans, and even 67 percent of Republicans favor the minimum wage bill, a bill that we could pass in a clean way in a day. The Republican leadership is going to allow to come to this floor only a bill, only a bill, that carries with it about \$70 billion of tax breaks for the 1 percent of Americans who make over \$300,000 a year.

Now, they are going to hold a simple minimum wage increase, a \$1 wage increase, for the lowest income workers in this country. They are going to hold that bill hostage to a huge tax reduction for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, who are the people who contribute mostly to political campaigns, to their own political PAC campaigns and such. So all of these things are interconnected. Many people do understand how interconnected, why we get the legislation that we get; why we do not get the bills that the gentleman has shown so graphically, the rest in pieces.

The campaign finance is a pretty critical question in these.

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The influence of money in the passage of legislation, in what legislation comes up before us, and what is allowed to be debated, and what ends up being passed by this Congress in this 106th Congress is a critically important matter until we can get campaign finance reform to pass through here and not be juggled between the two branches and killed by the one branch, and maybe next year it will end up being killed by this branch, and it is passed by the Senate or something.

It is critical that we do something about campaign finance reform, or we are going to continue to see this musical chairs process by which those bills that the Americans by the largest numbers say they want us to do because those are important to them in their daily lives, those bills are not going to be handled this year or next year and the second year of this session.

So I am very happy to join with the gentlemen that have been here tonight. The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) has shown such leadership in bringing to the attention of the Amer-

ican people these kinds of ironies in how we are functioning, what we are not doing, what we should be doing, what the American people want us to do that is not getting done. I am very happy to add a Massachusetts view to what has already been said.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER). There were two points that he raised that I just wanted to mention briefly, because I think we only have a few minutes left. But he brought out the fact that the Republicans have not even looked at the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare, in other words, this debate that we have discussed tonight and we have had about whether or not the Republican appropriation bills and their budget actually spend the Social Security surplus. We know that it has about \$17 billion that has come from this Social Security surplus in order to pay for their budget.

But that is really a minor issue compared to the fact that, over the long-term, we need to address the financing of Social Security and Medicare for future generations.

President Clinton has actually put forth proposals in both of those areas, primarily by saying that whatever surplus is generated through general revenues over the next 10 years, a good amount of that be used to shore up Social Security and Medicare for long-term purposes. The Republicans have not even looked at that. That is an agenda they have not even touched. The bottom line is it is going to come home to roost at some point.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, it should come home to roost. But the reason they have not touched it is a very deliberate reason. As has already been discussed here this evening, they opposed the creation of Social Security. They opposed virtually to a person the creation of Medicare 30 years ago. Of course, earlier this year, they rammed through the Congress very quickly and then, because it was not very popular out in the general populace, sort of backed away from it, but they ran through a huge, a huge tax reduction using every penny of the projected surpluses while not a penny of those had yet been produced, but only were projections, but used every penny of it that would have been necessary, very deliberately used every penny of it that would have been necessary if there ever was a possibility of extending Social Security and Medicare for the generations to come. It was a very deliberate, a very cynical kind of a move. They have done that, and they will do it again, because they never were in favor of Social Security or Medicare in the first place.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, that is a very good point. The other thing the gentleman mentioned, I just wanted to briefly say, is about the prices of prescription drugs and the need for a Medicare prescription drug benefit.

I just wanted to mention that today Families U.S.A. came out with a report that really documents very well the problem of high drug prices and the fact that so many senior citizens, they say 35 percent of Medicare beneficiaries, 14 million people, have absolutely no coverage for prescription drugs. The 65 percent that do have some coverage, it is limited. Increasingly, because of deductibles, co-payments, caps on the amount that is provided under the prescription drug coverage, they see a decline in their ability to obtain prescription drugs and increase costs out-of-pocket.

So this is, again, the issue of a Medicare prescription drug benefit is not pie in the sky. This is responding, as the Democrats have, to real needs, to concerns that people express to us every day; and, yet, the Republicans refuse to acknowledge it and refuse to act on it.

So I want to thank the gentleman again. I think we have run out of time, but I do want to say that we are going to continue to be here over the next week or two, before this House adjourns for the recess, to point out that the Republican leadership has the wrong agenda. They are not addressing the real priority of the American people. We are going to keep pressing that those priorities be addressed.

#### UPDATE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, tonight what we would like to talk about is an updating for the American public about, not only what is happening currently in Washington, D.C., but to give people an understanding about why Republicans are standing up essentially on several themes.

One is Social Security, people's retirement. The future of people's retirement should not be taken to fund the government. Social Security should be used for that which it was intended, and that is to be put aside for people's future retirement like myself. I have paid in 27 years into Social Security, 27 years, both my wife and I, and we want to make sure Social Security is there.

Second thought process, we must continue to balance the budget. By balancing the budget in Washington, D.C., and not spending Social Security, we will make sure that government has to look internally for its needs to prioritize, to provide those things that the government has to do. It has given